

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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OMB-01 /082 W

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O R 171624Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9430

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

CINCUSNAVEUR

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 5915

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, ET

SUBJ: FONMIN BRIEFING ON EPMG STATEMENT ON ERITREA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 5911

1. FONMIN KIFLE SPENT AFTERNOON BRIEFING GROUPS OF DIPLOMATS ON CHAIRMAN TEFERI'S MAY 16 STATEMENT ON ERITREA (SUMMARIZED REFTEL). I ATTENDED AS MEMBER OF 7-MAN "AMERICAS" GROUP AT 6:00 P.M. LITTLE THAT WAS NEW EMERGED.

2. KIFLE DESCRIBED PHOLOSOPHY IN TWO PARTS: (A) DESIRE TO ESTABLISH REGIONALLY AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATIONS FOR SELF-GOVT, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND WITHIN THAT FRAMEWORK REGIONAL AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA;

(B) DESIRE TO ALLOW AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE, CUSTOMS, ETC.

3. HE CITED PREVIOUS STATEMENTS TO PROVE PHILOSOPHY IS NOT NEW: (A) DEC 20 '74 STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN ON RESTORING RIGHTS OF REGIONAL SELF-GOVT; (B) SEPT '75 REVOLUTION DAY SPEECH ON POLICY OF DECENTRALIZATION; (C) 4 DEC '75 TASS INTERVIEW WITH CHAIRMAN WHO SAID SOLUTION TO PROBLEM IN ERITREA, TO EXTENT IT IS RELATED TO DESIRE AMONG ERITREANS FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY, WILL BE IN CONTEXT OF AUTONOMY OF OTHER PROVINCES.

4. HE SAID THAT TO THE EXTENT THAT THE DESIRE OF ERITREANS IS TO ASSERT THEIR SPECIAL CULTURAL IDENTITY, THE PROBLEM WILL RESPOND TO EPMG EFFORTS, BUT TO THE EXTENT ERITREANS WISH TO SECEDE, "THE EPMG WILL NOT FOLLOW".

5. FINALLY, HE STRESSED PROPOSED RELEASE OF PRISONERS, BUT SAID MOST IMPORTANT IS EPMG'S READINESS ENTER INTO DIALOG WITH ANY RPT ANY ELEMENTS OR ORGANIZATIONS, SO LONG AS IT IS ALONG LINES OF EPMG PROPOSALS.

I ASKED HOW THIS RELATED TO EPMG PLANS AND ACTIONS TO MOVE NUMBERS OF ARMED PEASANTS INTO ERITREA. KIFLE DECLINED TO GIVE DIRECT ANSWER, SAYING (THIS IS VERBATIM) "THE POLICY OF EPMG, WHILE EMPHASIZING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, AT SAME TIME MAKES CLEAR THAT ERITREANS CANNOT ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES THROUGH FORCE. NO AMOUNT OF EFFORT ON OUR PART CAN SUCCEED SO LONG AS ERITREANS BELIEVE THEY CAN GAIN THEIR OBJECTIVE THRU FORCE. THIS NEW INITIATIVE GOES FORWARD WHILE SECURITY MEASURES CONTINUE." I ASKED IF HE INTENDED TO INDICATE THAT THE MOVEMENT OF ARMED PEASANTS WILL CONTINUE, AND HE REPLIED HE DID NOT REFER TO ANY ARMED PEASANTS, BUT TO THE FACT THAT SOME SECESSIONISTS BELIEVE THEY CAN GET THEIR OBJECTIVE BY FORCE, AND THAT "SOME COUNTRIES" WERE ASSISTING THEM, IN ARMS INPUTS THAT INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY BEGINNING IN DEC '74.

OTHERS ASKED IF ANY REACTION HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM INSURGENTS. KIFLE SAID THERE IS NO SPECIFIC REACTION AS YET, BUT THE ERITREAN PEOPLE HAD REACTED POSITIVELY TO CHAIRMAN'S MAY DAY SPEECH, AND CONFIDENTIAL

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TO MAY 16 SPEECH. FURTHER QUESTIONS ON SHAPE-UP AUTONOMY ENVISIONED ELICITED LITTLE ELUCIDATION; KIFLE SIDESTEPED QUESTION WHETHER "FEDERALISM" WAS INTENDED, SAYING THE EVENTUAL SHAPE AND DEGREE OF AUTONOMY WILL EMERGE FROM EVOLUTION OF DESIRES OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT REGIONS.

KIFLE CLOSED WITH: "WE NEED YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT, UNDERSTANDING, SUPPORT, AND HELP IN RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM, WHILE ENSURING THE

UNITY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE COUNTRY AND GIVING MAX-
IMUM POSSIBILITIES FOR ALL CONSTITUENT PARTS OF THE NATION TO
ADMINISTER THEMSELVES IN THEIR VARIOUS CULTURES AND LANGUAGES."
HUMMEL

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